Thrones, Chairs, and Seats used by the Indian Mughals

By

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List of Abbreviations

A'in		Abū'l-Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, 3 vols (Nawal Kishor Press, Lucknow, 1893).
A S.	..	Muhammad Ṣâlih Kambo, *'Amal-i-Sālih* or *SHāh Jahan Nāma* (*Bibliotheca Indica*).
Bernier's *Travels* (Constable)		Archibald Constable and V. A Smith, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A D 1656-1668*, by François Bernier, Oxford University Press, 1914
B N	..	Mulla 'Abdu'l-Hamid Lāhorī, *Bādshāh Nāma*, 2 vols (*Bibliotheca Indica*) Vol. III (MS) by Muhammad Wāriṣ
Iqbālnāma	..	Mu'tamad KHān, *Iqbālnāma-i-Jahāñgīrī*, Calcutta, 1865 (*Bibliotheca Indica*).
L F.A	..	*Loan Exhibition of Antiquities*, Delhi, 1911.
P U L	..	Punjab University Library
Purchas	.	*Hakluytus Posthumus* or *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, by Samuel Purchas. 20 vols Glasgow, 1905
Qarniya	..	Muḥammad Tāhir "'Ināyat -KHān," Qarniya (MS).
Storia	..	Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mogul India* (1653-1708) Tr William Irvine, London, 1907-8
Tavernier	..	*Travels in India*, by Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne Translated by V. Ball, edited by William Crooke, 2 vols London 1925

Thevenot, *Travels.* .. *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant.* (In Three Parts). The Third Part: Containing the Relation of Indostan, the New Moguls, and of other People and Countries of the Indies. London, 1687.

Tūzuk. .. *Toozuk-i-Jehangeeree,* edited by Syud Ahmud. Ally Gurh, 1864.

Tūzuk, R. & B. .. *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī,* or *Memoirs of Jahāngīr,* translated by Alexander Rogers, and edited by H. Beveridge. 2 vols. London, 1909 and 1914.

A THRONE was one of the insignia of royalty. While some of the other ensigns, like the *'alam,* the *tumantogh,* etc., could be conferred on, and used by, princes and distinguished nobles, sitting on a throne was the exclusive privilege of the Emperor. This rule, however, seems to have been relaxed in S͟Hāh Jahān's mild and lenient reign, for we see not his sons but his grandsons, Prince Sulṭān Sikandar (s/o S͟Hāh S͟Hujā') and Prince Sulaimān S͟Hikoh (s/o Dārā S͟Hikoh) sitting on a throne.[1] Aurangzeb guarded the privilege with jealous care, and insisted on strict observance of the rule. But among the later Mug͟hals there was again a relapse, for sons of S͟Hāh 'Ālam can be seen on thrones.[2]

To be allowed to sit in court at all in the Emperor's presence was by itself a special privilege. All, including the highest ministers of the state, ambassadors from other kings and emperors, and even discrowned foreign princes who sometimes came to ask for military and financial assistance had to stand. The princes of the blood often stood in court, but sometimes were allowed to sit.[3] This permission granted to any other person was the mark of a very special favour, such as was conferred on 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm K͟Hwāja, when the latter was allowed by Jahāngīr, and a little later by S͟Hāh Jahān, to sit in court.[4] This concession was not in recognition of his position as ambassador, but was meant as a tribute to his personality and descent.

1. See pictures described on pp. 54-55 below.

2. See pp. 129-30 below.

3. This can be verified from many pictures. See also *Storia,* I. pp. 88 (middle) and 89.

4. For fuller details see *Tūzuk,* 416, B.N., I.i. 194 and author's *History of SHāh Jahān,* Chapter on Coronation.

The above applies to sitting on the floor in the Emperor's presence In two well-known cases princes were allowed to *sit on a proper seat in the durbar*

When Prince KHurram returned to Mandu after a victorious campaign in the Deccan, and appeared before Jahañgir, the latter was so pleased that he invested the prince with the total rank of $\frac{30,000}{20,000}$ *du-aspa si-aspa* and the title of "SHahjahān", and as a mark of special distinction 'an order was given that henceforth they should place a chair in the paradise—resembling assemblies near my throne for my son to sit upon This was a special favour for my son, as it had never been the custom heretofore' (*Tuzuk*, 195, R & B, I, 395)

Secondly, on the Nauroz festival celebrated on the night of Monday, the 23rd *Jumadu*, I, 1066, Dara SHakoh was allowed to sit on a gold seat placed by the imperial throne (*B N*, III, 108 *a*)

Shapes, sizes and designs of thrones grew with the skill and fancy of the artist who modelled them, and with the attention and patronage he received from the emperor From the contemporary pictures extant we gather that a great variety of design and execution came into existence as the material resources increased and the ambition and tastes of the emperors developed In later times, specially in SHah Jahān's reign, when the decorative side of art was at its zenith, great intricacy of design and a high standard of finish were attained

We do not possess sufficient material for a proper classification of models So we can only follow the chronological order, taking up the historical references as they come, and supplementing them with the information obtainable from the painter's art for the period

EARLY MUGHAL THRONES

Some of the illustrations available make it possible for us to take note of the thrones and chairs used by the ancestors of the Indian Mughals, before we take up a proper treatment of those belonging to the latter

In Pl XXX (a) of *L E A*[5] we see the Turkish Sultan, Bayazīd Yildenm, being brought before Timūr, who had inflicted a crushing

5 In this and future references *L.E.A* stands for *Loan Exhibition of Antiquities*, Delhi 1911

defeat on the former at Angora (1402 *A.C.*). Tīmūr, lance in hand, is sitting on a simple throne, more like a chair. His feet are on the ground.

Again on Pl. XXXI (a) we find Tīmūr squatting on a jewelled throne with a high back. He has a small crown in his hand and a big turban on his head.

It must be remarked, however, that Clavijo, who visited Tīmūr's court at a time when it was at the apogee of pomp and wealth, attended several levees and feasts, but he never saw the emperor sitting on a throne. His seat was usually a dais draped with kincobs and all sorts of gold cloth.

On Pl. II of *Storia,* I, we see Mīrān SHāh sitting on a simply constructed but jewelled open seat. It has six slender, graceful legs, and is fitted with a back. An attendant standing behind is holding over the royal occupant's head a daintily finished umbrella. Between the King's back and the back of the throne there is a bolster.

Next we have a picture of Abū Sa'īd, sitting on another type of hexagonal throne, with a back and six legs (these last even more slender than in the preceding picture). There is a similar *chatr* or umbrella overhead (*Storia,* I, Pl. III).

Pl. IV in the same volume gives SHaikh 'Umar on a throne, which does not differ materially from the throne of Abū Sa'īd noticed just above. The umbrella too is much of a muchness.

The foregoing pictures, the reader is warned, are probably not contemporary; and some of them may have as low a date as the latter half of the sixteenth century. We should remember that in India there was no portrait painting worth the name before the foundation of the Mughal empire. The pictures of the thrones on which Babur's ancestors are found sitting have therefore no historical value. They are given here only for the sake of completeness. What follows belongs to a different class.

THRONES OF THE INDIAN MUGHALS

Bābur.

We know that the treasury of Ibrāhīm Lodhī which passed into Bābur's possession at Delhi and Agra had accumulated through successive dynasties. So there can be no reasonable doubt that Bābur inherited a number of richly decorated thrones and chairs. Only we possess no descriptions or details.

Here are pictures of two of his thrones:

In Pl. XXXIV (b) of *L.E.A.*, Bābur is sitting, hawk in hand, on a hexagonal throne, which has six legs and a back, and is fitted with a c̲hatr. Between the Emperor and the back of the throne there is a bolster.

A picture by Farrukh Beg, painted about 1580, represents Bābur holding court. He is sitting on a simple throne, square in shape. It stands on four rather long legs, and has a railing all round, except for an opening in the centre of one of the sides. The throne is set with gems, and has a foot-stool in front (Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mug̲h̲als*, Pl. XIV).

Humāyūn.

What we have said of Bābur's reign applies also to his son's. Whatever Bābur and he inherited must have been left behind when the latter fled to Persia, and there is nothing on record to show how much of Bābur's wealth was in the royal treasury when Humāyūn returned and assumed control in 1555.

During this troubled reign we hear of a jewelled throne in several places.

In the passage where Gulbadan Begam describes the great feast given by Māham Begam, Humāyūn's mother, she speaks of a jewelled throne which was ascended by four steps. On it, on this occasion, were spread a gold-embroidered cover, a quilt and a pillow worked with gold thread (*Humāyūn Nāma*, 28 [113]).

Later on we have an account of a 'magic feast' given on the bank of the river.

'First there was a large octagonal room with an octagonal tank in the centre, and again, in the middle of the reservoir, an octagonal platform on which were spread Persian (*Wilāyatī*) carpets. Young men and pretty girls and elegant [? beautiful] women and musicians and sweet-voiced reciters [singers] were ordered to sit in the tank.

The jewelled throne which my lady [Humāyūn's mother] had given for the feast was placed in the fore-court of the house, and a gold-embroidered divan [? quilt] was laid in front of it, (on which) his Majesty and dearest lady sat together' (*Ibid*, 31 [118]).

After this was celebrated the wedding of Prince Hindāl Mīrzā. The 'mystic house', where it came off, is thus described:

'Opposite the big octagonal chamber, where the feast was held, was another small room also octagonal. Both these rooms were decorated with fastidious tastefulness. In the bigger octagonal chamber, where the feast was to be given, a begemmed throne was deposited. On it and under it were spread covering cloths embroidered in gold, and strings of pearls 1½ yards long were hung. At the end of each string there were two globes of crystal. These strings numbered about thirty or forty.

In the smaller room there was a jewelled *chhapar-khaṭ*,[6] a *pāndān* and a flask; while drinking vessels set with precious stones and plain vessels of gold and silver were placed in niches' (*Ibid.*, 33).

We have no means of finding out whether one and the same throne is referred to in these three places, or three different thrones were used on the various occasions.

Among the illustrations in *Humāyūn Nāma*, which are mostly reproductions of original pictures in the valuable volume of *Tārīkh-i-khāndān-i-Tīmūria* in Bankipur Library, we see one on Plate entitled 'Incidents following the birth of Akbar' (facing p. 158), where Humāyūn is sitting on a hexagonal throne, which stands on six feet, has a flight of steps of a rather unusual kind, and is furnished with a high back. The centre panel running all round the exterior show plenty of white surface picked out with in-set gems. Overhead is a rough-and-ready sort of canopy. The place does not look like the desert of Umarkot where Akbar was born—at a time when Humāyūn was a miserable fugitive, in dire straits. Was this throne carried about with Humāyūn in his wanderings ? The volume from which these pictures are photographed has high credentials, since it belonged to the Imperial Library, and bears an autograph note of SHaḥ Jahān.

Islām SHāḥ.

In No. H, 51 of Delhi Museum of Archaeology we have Islām SHāh, s/o SHer SHāh, sitting on a gold jewelled throne. It stands on four feet, is square in shape, and has a high back. The picture, however, seems to belong to the late, decadent period.

Akbar.

Abū'l-Faẓl is very brief on this subject: 'The *Aurang,* or throne, is made of several forms; some are inlaid with precious

6. A bedstead with a tester and curtains.

stones, and others are made of gold, silver, etc.'[7] The illustrations (Blochmann, Pl VII) give us only two models The first is a simple hexagonal seat with pillows (*masnad*) to lean against and fitted with an umbrella (*chatr*)—another royal ensign which was studded with never less than seven jewels The second is more elaborate, is square in shape, and has four feet and a roof carried on four poles Over the roof is a canopy standing on four poles likewise It is furnished with pillows and has two steps

In early Mughal times, and even during Akbar's reign, thrones seem to have been used only on state occasions, for we often see Bābur, Humāyūn, and Akbar sitting, even in full durbar, on an estrade, spread over with gold-cloth or velvet—sometimes in a *jharoka* or a pavilion The reader can verify this by looking at such pictures as E Blochet, *Mussalman Painting*, Pll CLXXVIII (Akbar), CLXXIX (Akbar), CLXXX (Akbar), CLXXXII (Akbar), CLXXXIII (Humāyūn), and CLXXXVII (Bābur), and C Stanley Clarke, *Indian Drawings (School of Jahāṅgīr)*, Pl 6 (Akbar) and Pl 7 (Jahāṅgīr)

Blochet, Pl CLXXVIII, is particularly noticeable, for here we have a clear view of the royal seat, which is unoccupied, the Emperor, who is trying to run on his sword, having just left it It is just an upholstered velvet-and-gold cloth settee, simply and tastefully finished, and placed in the *jharoka*

Akbar, says Monserrate, 'generally sits, with crossed legs, upon a couch covered with scarlet rugs However, he has a velvet throne of the Portuguese type carried with him on a journey, and very frequently uses it' (*Commentary*, 199)

On Plate facing p 164 of *Humāyūn Nāma* we have Akbar squatting on a simple hexagonal throne, which stands on six feet It is jewelled all over, the ground of the rectangular panels being picked out in attractive colours, and bosses of gems are seen centrally arranged The high back is surmounted with a delightfully proportioned canopy, studded with pearls and precious stones

Stchoukine (*La Peinture Indienne*, Pl XIV) has a picture of Akbar sitting on a small hexagonal throne with six panels It has no railing, has probably four elaborately, almost fantastically, worked legs, and a foot-stool or step standing on two small legs

On Pl XLVII (c) of *L E A* Akbar is sitting hawk in one hand sword in the other, on a gold throne, apparently octagonal, with

7 Āīn, 45; Blochman, 50

eight legs and a back, against which reposes a bolster. Over the Emperor's head is an umbrella strung with pearls; and Bīrbal stands behind the throne, *khāndā* in hand.

Jahāṅgīr

In one picture (Brown, Pl. XLIX), painted about 1610, we see Jahāṅgīr holding his court in a garden. He is sitting on a simple, square seat, probably jewelled, which stands on four legs. There is a rough-and-ready sort of canopy on four poles overhead; but it has no connection with the royal seat. Probably it is one of the portable thrones or *sandalīs*.

In Binyon, *Asiatic Art in the British Museum,* on Pl. LVI, No. 2, we have Jahāṅgīr sitting on a beautiful little throne, with a high back, graceful feet, and no railing, all set with jewels, and beautifully finished.

We have a somewhat similar throne in *Ā'īn* (Blochmann, Pl. VII, 1); but the two differ in important details.

A silver throne of a new design and novel fashion, which had been sent by Jahāṅgīr Qulī K͟Hān from Gujarāt, was placed before the Emperor on Thursday, the 13th *Muḥarram,* 1019 A.H. (= 19th *Farwardīn,* V.R.Y.), which was New Year's Day. It was inlaid and decorated with figures (*Tūzuk,* 81; R. & B., I, 168).

On the frontispiece of Percy Brown's *Indian Painting under the Mug͟hals,* Jahāṅgīr is sitting on a large open seat, which Mr. Brown describes as a 'gold and jewelled throne' (p. 84). Each of the four feet consists of a lion standing on an elephant. A flat cloth awning stands on the four columns of the throne. The picture portrays the celebration of the *Āb-pās͟hī* or *Gulāb-pās͟hī* festival held on 14 *Tīr,* IX R.Y. (*Tūzuk,* 130, R. & B., I, 265).

A gold-and-silver throne. A throne presented by I'timādu'd-Daula on Thursday, the 8th *Farwardīn,* XIV R.Y., is thus described by the Emperor: 'On Thursday, the 8th, I'timādu'd-Daula, *Madār-ul-Mulk* (the pivot of the country), having prepared a royal entertainment, begged to be allowed to receive me. In accepting this request his standing was raised. In fact, in decorating the assembly and the largeness of his offering, he had exceeded himself, and made many decorations, and illuminated all sides of the lake as far as the eye could reach, and decorated the streets both near and far with all kinds of lights and coloured lanterns. Among the offerings of that *Madār-us-sulṭana* there was a throne of gold and silver, much ornamented and decorated, the supports of which were in the form of tigers. It had been completed with great assiduity

in the space of three years, and was made at the cost of Rs 450,000 This throne had been made by a skilful European of the name of Hunarmand (skilful), who had no rival in the arts of a goldsmith and a jeweller, and in all sorts of skill (*hunarmandi*) He had made it very well, and I gave him this name' (*Tūzuk*, 266, R & B, II, 80) He was rewarded with 3000 *darbs*, a horse and an elephant (R & B, II, 82-83).

This European, Hunarmand, is Austin of Bordeaux, who was in India from 1613 to 1632, and who describes himself as an expert at counterfeiting precious stones and a skilful cutter of diamonds Jahāṅgir's story can be corroborated from Austin's letters In one dated Lahore, 20th July, 1620, he says 'I made him [the Great Mogul] a royal throne in which there are several millions of gold and of silver'[8] In another letter from the same place, bearing date, 27 April, 1625, he says, more fully, 'I have prepared a design for the construction of a royal throne for the King on which he sits once a year for nine days (which they call the new days), when the Sun enters the sign of the Ram, when their year commences This throne is supported by four lions weighing 150 quintals [quintal = 100 French pounds] of silver covered with beaten gold leaf, and the canopy is supported by 12 columns in which there are 12 thousand ounces of enamelled gold The canopy which is in the form of a dome has been covered by me with 4 thousand of my artificial stones, but the genuine stones corresponding to these are of inestimable value, for the King has a great number of pearls and it is certain that he also has more large diamonds and large rubies than all the princes of the universe On the ascent which has four steps I made 4 "Suisses" like those which are at the gate of the Loure, with halbards in their hands but no wine in their *stomachs*'.[9]

There is no doubt that this is the throne mentioned by Jahāṅgir in the passage already quoted

The first account is vague and may or may not refer to the throne described in the *Tūzuk* The second account is full and corresponds substantially with Jahāṅgir's, and the title "Hunarmand" forms part of Austin's signature at the bottom of Letters I and IV The Editor of the letters thinks that two distinct thrones

8. "Four Letters by Austin of Bordeaux" in *Journal of the Punjab Historical Society*, IV, 1, p 7
9 *Ibid.*, p 13

January they obtained private audience of the Emperor at Nūrpur There, says Von Poser, the Emperor 'inspected the throne, made of gold and about a foot high, constructed after Mr. Augustin's designs'[11]

Now it is true that Jahāṅgīr was at Nūrpur (Kangra) about the end of January, more probably the beginning of February, 1622[12] No presentation of a throne, however, is mentioned in the *Tūzuk* on or near that date This is 2 years and 10 months after I'timādu'd-Daula's throne had been presented to Jahāṅgīr It is possible that I'timādu'd-Daula's throne was being carried in Jahāṅgīr's camp, and when Austin came to pay his respects the talk naturally turned on the throne, especially as Āṣaf KHān was present at the interview and acted as interpreter in the conversation So this evidence carries us no further.

The reader will have noticed by the way that Austin and his friend were putting up in Āṣaf KHān's camp This shows the relations between I'timādu'd-Daula's family and Austin of Bordeaux We should naturally expect this after Austin had prepared the throne to I'timādu'd-Daula's order

On Thursday, 24 *Mihr*, XIV R.Y., the day of Dasahra celebration, Mu'tamid KHān offered to Jahāṅgīr a gold throne,[13] with a *yāqūt* ring a piece of coral, etc—total price, Rs 16,000 The throne, says the Emperor, was well made (*Tūzuk*, 277, R & B, II, 100-1).

Prince KHurram's Throne It appears that Prince KHurram had prepared a jewelled throne for presentation to the Emperor at a cost of five lakhs of rupees But before it could be offered things changed, and the Prince went into open rebellion In the collision, which took place between the imperialists and SHāhjahān's rebel forces at Ahmadābād, the throne with 2 lakhs in cash and other things fell into the hands of the royalists, but as they were straitened for money they broke up the throne and distributed the gold among the troopers as pay (*Tūzuk*, 362-63; R & B, II, 262-64; *Iqbālnāma*, 206-7).

Among vague and hearsay talk about thrones we may notice the following brief passage in Terry:

11 Note on Austin of Bordeaux by William Irvine in *J.R.A.S* for 1910, p. 1344

12 Jahāṅgīr encamped at Nurpur on 26 Bahman (i.e., early in February, 1622) So this interview must have taken place on that date, or nine days after the death of I'timādu'd-Daula.

13 R. & B translate 'tablet,' I do not know why.

'Yet may this King be thought to exceed any other in glorious Thrones and rich Jewels. Hee hath a Throne in his Palace at Agra, ascended by degrees, on the top whereof are foure Lions made of massie Silver, gilded, set with Precious Stones, supporting a Canopie of massie Gold' (Purchas, IX, 49). Terry, we must remember, never went to Agra.

LASTLY, WE MAY NOTICE A THRONE OF BLACK SLATE

Jahāñgīr describes in the following passage a throne of black slate, which was brought from Allahabad, and had some poetry inscribed on it by his order: 'Daulat KHān, who had been sent to Allahabad to bring the throne of black stone, came on Wednesday, the 4th of the month of Mihr (15th September, 1610), and had an audience and brought the stone safe and sound. In truth it was a wonderful slab, very black and shining. Many say it is of a species of touchstone; in length it was one-eighth less than four cubits [3⅞ *dir'a* or yards], and in breadth 2½ cubits and one *tasū*, whilst its thickness may be three *tasū*. I ordered stone-cutters to carve suitable couplets on the sides of it. They had attached feet to it of the same kind of stone. I often sat [sit] on that throne.' (*Tūzuk,* 85; R. & B., I, 177).

We know a little more about this throne from other sources. The author of *B.N.* informs us that on the western side of the quadrangle of *Daulatkhāna-i-khāṣ* (at Agra) there is a platform of marble, where SHāhjahān often sits in summer afternoons and evenings; and on the eastern (*i.e.*, the river) side there is a throne of touchstone (*sang-i-maḥakk*) (*B.N.*, I, ii, 238). This latter is the one referred to in *Tūzuk* above.

Travellers' guides report that these two thrones are still to be found in the places indicated in *B.N.* Mr. Havell informs us that 'on the terrace in front of the Dîwân-i-khâs are placed two thrones, one of white marble on the side facing the Machchi-Bhawan, and the other of black slate on the river side' (*Handbook to Agra and the Taj,* 56).

The material is black slate, and the slab is 3½ yards long, over 2 yards broad, and some 6 inches thick.[14] It stands on octagonal pedestals about 16 inches high.

14. Carleylle (*Archaeological Survey of India Report for* 1871-72, Delhi and Agra, IV, 132) is out in his breadth and Beale (*Miftāḥu't-Tawārīkh,* page 206) has exaggerated the thickness. Keene (*Handbook for Visitors to Agra and its neighbourhood,* ed. E. A. Duncan, Calcutta, 1909, p. 120) and Newell (*Three Days at Agra,* 53) only copy Carleylle.

This throne has the following inscriptions: The first is

دست بحر که تیغ او سیاه　　چون دو پیکر سپهر عدو دو نیم　　تا شد این تختگاه فرخنده　　تکیه گاه جهانگیر
ملک خسروان پایه ملک　　مهر و ماه را نیایه مرز وسیم　　داد حاصل بهر تا سره　　لولوی بها چو در بت
چو تاج او کلکه شدم　　بهر این خستم از خرد تکلیم　　تا ماند تختگاه خورشید　　گفت ماه سریر شاه

and the second, written in between the preceding verses, is

همیشه باد منور بنور مهر اله　　سریر حضرت سلطان سلیم اکبر شا

Both these were inscribed in 1011 *A H* = 1602-3 *A C*, some three years before Akbar's death Prince Salim was at this time in rebellion at Allahabad, where, having failed in his efforts, he was now ignominiously suing for peace and pardon

The third inscription reads thus

چون شاه سلیم وارث تخت نگین　　بر تخت نشست بست گیتی آیین
شد رسم مبارکش جهانگیر چو ذات　　از نور عدالت نقش نورالدین

The passage we have cited from *Tūzuk* refers to the bringing of the throne from Allahabad, and the writing of this last inscription (1018 = 1610)

I have found no authority for Beale's statement (p 206) that Akbar prepared this throne for his son Salim It is apparently on the support of this that Havell remarks that the throne was 'probably made to commemorate the recognition by Akbar of his son's title to the succession' (p 56) Both these statements are unsupported by any historical testimony.

'On this terrace [in front of the *Diwān-i-Khās*]' adds Mr Havell, 'Jahāngir sat to enjoy the sight of his brigantines on the river, or to watch the elephant fights on the level place beneath the walls From side to side of this throne there is a long fissure, which opened, so says tradition, when the Jāt Rajah, Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur, in 1765 set his usurping feet on the throne of the Great Mogul The tradition holds that blood spurted out of the throne in two places and red marks in the stone are pointed out as evidence of the truth of the story The impious chief was shortly afterwards assassinated in the palace' (p 56-57).

S̲Hāh Jahān

The completion of the fort-palace of S̲Hāhjahānābād, which had taken eight years and a sum of 60 lakhs of rupees to build, was the fulfilment of one of S̲Hāh Jahān's most cherished ambitions. The investiture, which was held on Saturday, 24 *Rabī'* I, 1058, was celebrated, as might be expected, in a particularly sumptuous manner, furnishings and decorations being carried out on an unusually large scale, even for that reign.

On this occasion, we learn from *B.N.* that a jewelled, or gold-enamelled, or *munabhat* (inlaid or embossed), or plain throne was deposited in every room of the palace. From this general statement we gather incidentally that there was quite a large number of thrones, executed in various kinds of workmanship, used on occasions, and in different parts of the palace—both in the Haram and outside.

In addition to these, a 'jewelled throne' was deposited in a square place prepared for it in the centre of the *daulatk̲h̲āna-i-k̲h̲āṣ-o-'ām.* All round this square place ran a railing of gold. In front of the throne was erected on jewelled poles a gold-worked canopy finished with strings of pearls. On either side of the throne-place stood a jewelled *chatr,* also strung with pearls, and an octagonal throne of gold. And behind the throne-place were placed gold and jewelled stools carrying the *qūr,* which consisted of begemmed swords with jewelled *pardalas,* shields, quivers with jewelled fittings, and jewelled lances (*B.N.*, III, 18a). This 'jewelled throne' cannot be the Peacock Throne, as the latter was at this date at Agra. It is probably one of those we see in the pictures.

Thus we learn that almost every large chamber in S̲Hāhjahān's palace at Delhi had a throne to itself.

This is roughly corroborated by Tavernier, who says, 'It should be stated that the Great Mogul has seven magnificent thrones, one wholly covered with diamonds, the others with rubies, emeralds, or pearls' (I, p. 303). Then after describing the Peacock Throne at length, he goes on: 'Behind this grand and magnificent throne a smaller one stands, in the form of a bathing-tub. It is of oval shape, about 7 feet in length and 5 in breadth, and the outside is covered with diamonds and pearls, but it has no canopy' (p. 306).

No throne answering to this description is to be seen in any of the pictures extant.

'The other five thrones,' he continues, 'are arranged in a superb hall in another court, and are covered with diamonds, without any coloured stones I shall not give a minute description of them for fear of wearying the reader, not forgetting that one may become disgusted with the most beautiful things when they are too often before the eyes These five thrones are disposed in such a manner that they form a cross, four making a square, the fifth being in the middle, but somewhat nearer to the two which are placed furthest away from the people

After the Emperor has remained about half an hour in his harem, he comes out with three or four eunuchs to seat himself in the middle one of the five thrones, and during the five days of the festival, sometimes his elephants are brought, sometimes his camels, and all the nobles of his Court come to make their accustomed presents All this is done with much magnificence, and with surroundings worthy of the greatest monarch in the East, the Great Mogul being in power and wealth in Asia what the King of France is in Europe, but having nothing comparable with him in might if he waged war with a valiant and clever people like our Europeans' (p 308). The first part of this passage seems to contradict what the author has said earlier about the seven magnificent thrones But it is long since we learnt the lesson that no statements by Tavernier can bear close examination

In Brown we have a beautiful picture of a throne of SHāhjahān's, painted, it is said, about 1630 It is not indeed the Peacock Throne [15] as the title avers, but judging by this representation it must have been one of the finest thrones in SHāhjahān's treasury

It is square in shape, has a low railing on all four sides (with an opening in the centre of one of the sides), stands on four graceful, richly jewelled legs, and is ascended by three jewelled steps, the lowest of which stands on four dainty little feet. It is fitted with a shapely canopy supported by four begemmed columns The whole is tastefully finished (*Indian Painting under the Mughals*, pl XXV)

Another delightful picture of a throne of SHāhjahān's is to be found on Pl 10, C Stanley Clarke, *Indian Drawings (School of Jahāngīr)* This throne also stands on four feet, has a comparatively simple footstool, a low railing with an opening on one side

15 For a further notice see pp [illegible]

for entry, four columns carrying a fine canopy surmounted by two birds—all stuck over with gems and proportioned and decorated in unimpeachable taste. This and the last picture are closely similar to each other and to the illustration of a throne in the *Ā'īn* already referred to. Yet the objects portrayed are not identical. Either they are ringing the changes on an identical throne, of which none of these is a facsimile, or they are likenesses of three distinct thrones which only differ in slight details. The latter alternative is less likely.

In No. H, 35 of the Delhi Museum of Archaeology we find S̲Hāh Jahān sitting on a plain gold throne, square in shape, which has four legs, a high back, and a separate footstool. A pearl-fringed umbrella of red colour is fixed over the throne.

There is a good picture in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology, to which no number is allotted. It is a petition submitted to S̲Hāh Jahān by 'Abdu'r-Ras̲h̲īd Dailmī, better known as Āqā Ṣāḥib, the court calligraphist of that reign, and tutor to Dārā S̲Hikoh. On one sheet is the text of the petition written in beautiful *nasta'līq*, on the other is S̲Hāh Jahān sitting in a spacious kiosk (it may be, a throne) built on a platform. A mace-bearer is standing behind the Emperor inside the kiosk; and the petitioner is standing before the Emperor presenting his petition. The picture reveals a master's hand.

A gold throne. On the New Year's Day which fell on Friday, 22 *S̲Hawwāl,* 1046 *A.H.*, the celebration was particularly joyous as S̲Hāhjahān has just recovered from an illness which had lasted nineteen days. The court poets recited poems of thanksgiving and praise; and the first present that was offered was that by Begam Ṣāḥib, which consisted, besides jewels, jewelled arms and rarities, of a gold throne decorated in relief. All the presents, the value of which came to 2½ lakhs, were accepted (*B.N.*, I, ii, 245, *A.S.*, II, 225).

In the spring of 1641 *A.C.* S̲Hāh Jahān was at Lahore fort, where he celebrated the New Year's Day—the spring festival.[16]

16. It fell on Wednesday, 9 *Ẕū'l-ḥijj*, 1050 *A.H.* (= 22 March, 1641), *i.e.*, on the eve of the *'Īd-i-aẓḥā* so that the two celebrations ran together. Manrique mixes up the *'Īd-i-aẓḥā* with the *'Idu'l-fiṭr*, when he says that the *Nauroz* 'that year fell during the Easter of their Ramadan, with its thirty days' fast' (p. 192). Making allowance for this error, Manrique's dates are accurate, and the [illegible] avourable remark in the footnote quite uncalled for.

Manrique, who witnessed the ceremony, has given a vivid, if somewhat quaint, description of the sights and scenes he saw After giving a somewhat elaborate and rather confusing account of the halls of the Palace he goes on thus to describe a throne which he saw

'In the centre of this ['magnificent and richly decorated hall'], forming as it were the eighth (if but modern) wonder among the wonders of antiquity, stood a superb Throne So, if what is most perfect disturbs our feelings, just as the glowing rays of the Sun confronting us obscure our vision, if the roar of dashing clashing water hurling themselves from a lofty rock stuns and deafens our hearing, if the scent of aromatic drugs and oriental spices confounds our sense of smell, if the sweetness of the honey of Hybla vitiates our sense of taste, if the effects of frost numb and destroy the sense of touch,—what wonder is it that, when my senses were distracted at the sight of so remarkable and surprising an object as that Throne, I could not well grasp the precious nature of its constituent materials? Yet, in order to carry out my promise, I will not fail to give such an account of it as my perturbed and numbed senses could grasp at the time

It was a Throne which contained within its spherical circumference four separate stages, each with six gold and silver steps, on which the designer had shown the unrivalled skill of his workmanship

Upon this Throne or tacto [*takht*], as the natives style it, stood eight exceedingly rich columns of gold sustaining a Cupola of the same metal which formed a canopy and cover over a most magnificent and beautiful seat, also of gold The Throne, in the brilliance of its glittering, polished metal, thus served to remind one that, except with due submissiveness, one should not amongst such splendours dare to gaze on the richest gifts which ancient mother earth is wont to bestow on the great and most powerful of this world.

For here were to be seen the purest and most brilliant diamonds from Bisnagna [Bisnagar or Vijayanagar], lovely to look on and (as our St. Isidor avers) most useful against enchantments, while they far exceeded ordinary diamonds in size Here, too, was the purple ruby from Ava, which exposed to the air glows red and scintillates under the rays of the glittering Planet Also were to be seen green emeralds, most precious of stones, from the mountains of Jatur, whose soft radiance and glow, comforting and cheering the

tired sight, entices the eye to look upon them. Moreover, here were to be seen, even more lovely, and hailing from the same Jatir mountains, the celestial sapphire, whose colour resembles Heaven's blue in a serene sky and in splendour the Firmament: they say that they cool down, in whosoever bears them, all lustful ardours of the flesh.

Nor, to complete the perfection of this rare marvel, did it lack the ornaments of the gates of Paradise; for it could be seen that the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf had to this end contributed its finest and roundest pearls, useful, it is alleged, for the body's health and in lotions for bad eyesight.

Three sets of steps made of silver, seven palms in height, encompassed this Throne. These were in three separate flights and served to distinguish the rank and dignity of those who, within their precincts, attended the Court of the Mogol Majesty' (II, 197-99).

Despite Manrique's quaint eloquence, we are unable from this description to identify this throne with any throne that we know.

Gold enamelled throne. S͟Hāh Jahān built for himself a gold enamelled throne 2½ yards long, 1 yard[17] and 21 *ṭassu* wide, and 4½ yards high. It was prepared in a period of nine months, and cost five lakhs of rupees.

S͟Hāh Jahān sat on this throne on 8 *Rabīʿ* I, 1062 and again on Friday, 26 *Ṣafar*, 1064, *A.H.* (Solar Weighment celebrating the beginning of the 63rd solar year of his life).[18]

Manucci was, in the summer of 1656, received in audience by S͟Hāh Jahān at Delhi. His description of the court, its arrangements and ceremonial, is interesting, and deserves to be quoted in full:

17. A yard is about 33 inches.

18. *B.N.*, III, P.U.L. MS., 60 *b*, and 85 *b*; *A.S.*, III, 136 and 180. The dimensions given above are deduced from the somewhat conflicting statements in the authorities cited. There is material discrepancy, however, over the height of the throne; and there is just a chance that two different thrones were used on the two occasions referred to, one 3 yards and 21 *ṭassū* high used on 8 *Rabīʿ* I, 1062, and the other 4½ yards high used on 26 *Ṣafar*, 1064; but in that case the thrones must have agreed in every other particular including both dimensions and cost—which is perhaps unlikely. It must be said in sup[illegible] slender hypothesis, however, that both *B.N.*, III and *A.S.*, III gi[illegible] 21 *ṭassū* as the height on the earlier occasion—which poin[illegible] only if *A.S.* is not simply copying from *B.N.*

'I noted that the throne on which the king, SHāh Jahān, was seated stood in front of and near to the palace of the women, so that as soon as he came out of its door he reached the throne It is like a table, adorned with all sorts of precious stones and flowers in enamel and gold There are three cushions, a large one, five spans in diameter, and circular, which serves as a support to the back, and two other square ones, one on each side, also a most lovely mattress For in Turkey, and throughout the whole of Hindustān, they do not sit upon chairs, but upon carpets or mattresses, with their legs crossed Around the throne, at the distance of one pace, are railings of gold of the height of one cubit, within which no one enters except the king's sons Before they enter they come and, facing the king, go through their obeisance, then enter the palace and come out by the same door from which the king issued Arriving there, they again make obeisance, and upon a sign from the king they take their seat in the same enclosure, but at the foot of and on one side of the throne Thereupon the pages appear with the umbrella, parasol, betel, spittoon, sword, and fly-brusher

Below the throne, several feet lower than it, a space is left, sufficient for the Secretary (? *wazir*) and the greatest officials of the court This space is surrounded by a silver railing Near it stand "grusberdares" (*gurz bardār*)—that is to say, the bearers of golden maces, whose duty it is to carry orders from the court to princes of the blood royal After a descent of a few more steps there is another space of greater size, where are the captains and other officials, also the "grusberdares" (*gurz-bardars*) with silver maces, who convey the order of the court to the governors, generals, and other princes These are placed with their backs to a railing of wood painted vermilion, which surrounds the space

The hall in which stood the royal seat is adorned with twenty highly-decorated pillars, which support the roof This roof stretches far enough to cover the spaces enclosed within the silver railing, and is hidden half-way by an awning of brocade Further, a canopy over the king's throne is upheld by four golden pillars

Outside the wooden railing is a great square, where, close to the railing stand nine horses on one side and nine on the other, all saddled and equipped Near to the pillars are brought certain elephants on every day that the king gives audience, and there they make their obeisance, as I shall describe when I speak of the elephants (ii 5) Behind the horses already spoken of were four handsomely-adorned elephants, and in the square a considerable

number of soldiers stand on guard. At the end was a great hall, where were stationed the players on instruments, and these, upon the king's appearing to give audience, played very loudly, to give notice that the king was already in the audience hall.

The silence preserved was astonishing, and the order devoid of confusion. For this purpose there are officials, whose business it is to see that the people are placed in proper order. Some of these officials held gold sticks in their hand, and these came within the silver railing. The others carried silver sticks, and they took great heed that throughout the court nothing was done which could displease the king' (*Storia* I, 88-90).

It appears that the Emperor sat on a throne in the *Jharoka* of the Hall of Public Audience in Delhi Fort-palace; and Manucci's 'twenty highly-decorated pillars', instead of forty, is only one of his errors, which are common enough.

Although Manucci's description of the throne is extremely meagre, we know that this could not be the Peacock Throne; for, according to Manucci's account,[19] S̲Hāh Jahān never used the Peacock Throne. Nor was it possible to accommodate the Peacock Throne in the *Jharoka*.

Some thrones of Princes have been portrayed by artists:
On Pl. XVIII of *Storia* (Vol. II) we see Sulṭān Sulaimān S̲Hikoh, son of Dārā S̲Hikoh, sitting on a small jewelled throne. It is square in shape, and has four legs and a back. An attendant behind holds the umbrella over him.

On Pl. XXI, *Storia* (Vol. II), we have Sulṭān Sikandar, son of Prince S̲Hāh S̲Hujā" sitting on a square, four-legged, high-backed jewelled throne. This specimen differs very slightly from the one on Pl. XIX to be dealt with later.

Thrones of stone. All thrones were not made of the precious metals. Marble thrones were sometimes used. Jahāñgīr's throne of black slate has already been noticed. A wooden throne belonging to Aurangzeb will be mentioned under that emperor.

A Throne of White Marble. This, as we have seen, still stands on the Machhi Bhawan side of the terrace in Agra fort. B.N. describes it as a platform of marble, but Agra Guides call it a marble throne. It is a rectangular slab and stands on four legs.

19. See below.

It has been there since SHāh Jahān's time · earlier history is not available

We are told in the same place (*B N*, I, ii, 238) that on the south side of the Machhi Bhawan courtyard is a kiosk of marble on four columns, decorated with embossed (or inlaid) work Inside this kiosk stands a gold throne for the Emperor

In the Hall of Private Audience in Delhi Fort the visitors can see today a beautifully carved marble dais It is said, apparently on the authority of Carr Stephen, that it was used as a support of the Peacock Throne Taking the height of this marble platform together with the altitude of the Peacock Throne as we know it, it would hardly seen possible to accommodate the Throne under the roof of the Hall Be that as it may, the marble dais is a remarkable piece of furniture by itself

Lord Curzon describes (*Persia and the Persian Question*, I 313) the white marble throne of Kerim Khan Zend wrought of marble of Yezd, and brought from SHirāz—which he saw at Teheran Some suppose it to be an Indian throne and part of Nādir SHāh's spoil See an illustration of it in Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, p 222

PEACOCK THRONE

Great and varied as the wealth is through which we have meandered we have not yet reached the climax The throne-building which we have so far surveyed does not reflect the mind and art of SHāh Jahān The specimens noticed represent only minor efforts made either to serve an occasion or to satisfy a passing whim, or else they were merely prompted by a love of variety The Peacock Throne was SHāh Jahān's *chef d'oeuvre, by which he is to be remembered and* judged Historically its design or decoration was not evolved out of any pre-existing specimens The throne was designed, as the reader will see, quite early in the reign, and we can trace no family resemblance between it and those manufactured before in the earlier reigns

We deal with it last, as it is the last word in Mughal decorative art

The vigorous artistic instinct of a great and free people was blindly yearning for scope and effective expression, and in the decorative, as well as in the building art it was reserved for SHāh Jahān's genius to lead the converging currents of aesthetic life and

taste into some great culminating achievement, which would remain at least as an abiding memory of a great people's great ideals.

The building of the Peacock Throne is a conspicuous landmark in the world's artistic creation. Those who consider it to be only a very costly work of art miss the entire point. Just as among the products of nature there is something classic about precious stones, so is there something classic, indeed, something epic, about the Peacock Throne in the world of art. Mulla 'Abdu'l-Ḥamīd is indulging in no senseless superlatives when he says that in the reign of no king or emperor in the ages gone by has a similar throne been prepared (*B.N.*, I, ii, 78). He is stating the literal truth—indeed, with commendable restraint. On rare occasions have beauty and wealth been so well wedded together. The only pity is that the extreme costliness of the material and delicacy of workmanship proved but a poor guarantee against destruction when political vicissitudes exposed the Throne to the vulgar greed of the barbarian.

The following account of the building of the *Takht-i-ṭā'ūs* is taken from *B.N.*:

Large quantities of precious stones had gathered for years in the Jewel Treasury. Early in the reign it occurred to the Emperor SHāh Jahān that shutting up so much beautiful wealth in the store-rooms of the Treasury defeated the true purpose of its acquisition, *viz.*, show and decoration. They could and should be used in such a way as to serve the double purpose of making so much art treasure visible to the public and of being utilized to a practical end. Orders were consequently issued that leaving apart the *khaṣṣa* jewels kept in the Jewel Treasury of the Haram the total value of which was assessed at 2 crores of rupees, and which were worn on the person of the Emperor, all the stones and gems in the outer Treasury,[20] which totalled 3 crores in value, should be passed before the Emperor.

Out of them precious stones weighing 50,000 *miṣqāls* (say, about 500 lb.) and worth 86 lakhs of rupees were selected and entrusted to Bebadal KHān, the *dārogha* of the Goldsmiths' Department. These, along with pure gold weighing one lakh *tolas* or 250,000 *miṣqāls* (= 2500 lb.), the value of which came to 14 lakhs

20. It may be noted in passing that B.N. has KHān Zamān, which ought to be KHāzinān, as is clear from Burhānū'd-Dīn, *Mulakhkhaṣ*, f. 831 *a*.

of rupees,[21] were to be used in the building of a throne measuring 3¼ yards[22] long, 2½ yards broad, and 5 yards high (including the canopy). The ceiling was to be decorated chiefly with enamel and in part with inlaid work, and the roof profusely studded with rubies, *yāqūts*, etc., the canopy being supported by twelve pillars of emeralds. On the top of the canopy were to stand two jewelled peacocks, and between these a tree studded with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and pearls. And three steps set with bright jewels were to afford ascent to the throne.

The throne was seven years building, and was completed in 1044 A.H., the total expense being one crore of rupees as already indicated.

Eleven bejewelled slabs, [illegible], were fixed round the royal seat for support, the place of the twelfth being left open, apparently for entry. The middle one of these eleven slabs on which the Emperor leaned and rested [illegible] was worth ten lakhs of rupees. This slab bore in its centre a [illegible] ruby (worth 1 lakh) which [illegible] Abbas of Persia had sent as a present to the Emperor Jahāngīr, who [illegible] Khurram in the Deccan as a reward for his [illegible] return.

The kings and princes [illegible] their names engraved on it. [illegible] Mīrzā Shāh Rukh, Mīrzā [illegible] Jahāngīr (with his fathers [illegible]) already been referred to above [illegible]

[illegible] Muhammad [illegible] the Emperor's [illegible] the following [illegible] was inscribed in green enamel.[24]

[illegible]

رهی فرخنده تخت پادشاهی
که شد سامان بتائید الهی

فلک او را که پیکر دش مشکل
ز رخ خورشید را آگنده اخت ادل

بحکم کارفرما صرف شد پاک
بمینا کاریش مینای افلاک

جز این تخت از زر و گوهر چه مقصود
وجود بحر و کان را حکمت این بود

زیا قوتش که در قید بهانیست
لب لعل تبا نهر ادل بجانیست

برای پایه اش مهر کشیده
ز اخضر لعبر خاتم بریده

بجز جنس عالم از زر شد جهان پاک
نه شد از گنج خالی کیسهٔ خاک

رساند گر فلک خود را بپایش
دهد خورشید هم از رو نهالش

سرافرازی که مهر بر پایه اش سود
ز گردون پایه بر تخت افزود

خراج بحر و کان پیرایه او
پناه عرش و کرسی سایه او

بانواع جواهر گشته الوان
چراغ عالمی پروانه آن

در اطرافش بود گلها ز مینا
فروزان چون چراغ از طور سینا

چو سیلر دل ز فرازش کوتهی دست
نگین خولیش جم بر پایه اش بست

تار از فروز لعل و گوهر
تواند صد فلک را داد اختر

دهد شاه جهان را بوسه بر پای
از آن شد پایه قدرش فلک سای

شد شاه جهان جشن جوان بخت
خراج عالمی را خرج یک تخت

خداوندی که عرش و کرسی افراخت
تواند قدرتش تختی چنین ساخت

اثر باقیست تا کون و مکان را
بود بر تخت جا شاه جهان را

بود تختی چنین هر روز جایش
خراج هفت کشور زیر بالش

چه تاریخش زبان در رسید از دل
بگفت اورنگ شاهنشاه عادل

اورنگ شاهنشاه عادل gives the year 1044.

Another has found another chronogram equally good:

سریر همایون صاحب قران (1044)[25]

25. *B.N.*, I, ii, 78-81.

This is all that 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the prime authority for SHāh Jahān's reign, has to say on the subject

Now we can turn to *'Amal-i-Ṣalih* Only additions and modifications need be noticed

Muḥammad Ṣālih[26] adds that the throne was rectangular in shape Further he says that the jewelled canopy stood on eight enamelled pillars of gold So not only have we 'enamelled' instead of 'emerald', which perhaps can be reconciled by imagining that the piers had an emerald enamel like the inscription inside, but we have eight columns instead of twelve, which is a serious discrepancy The twelve columns of *B N* are supported by all the copies of *Qarniya* that I have seen and by Burhānu'd-Din, *MulakhKhaṣ*, 831 *b*

Again, on the top of the canopy two gold enamelled peacocks, on the uplifted (tail) feathers of which emeralds are set, stand facing each other, and each of them holds in his beak a ruby of singular brilliance

In *B N*, the peacocks are jewelled, and here they are enamelled But this is not material, since they were probably both The other details are welcome as supplementary The relative position of the birds is corroborated, only the tree between them is not mentioned in *A S*—which is probably an oversight Muhammad Ṣālih winds up by saying that jewels of all kinds like *yāqūts*, emeralds, diamonds of European cut, large and small, have been used for decoration everywhere

This is all the authentic or official history that we possess on the subject.

All the other accounts in Persian histories are more or less mediately derived from these contemporary accounts, and may therefore be ignored as second-hand or hearsay.

It is now time to take up the European authorities Tavernier and Bernier are eye-witnesses, the former a jeweller who visited the capital several times, and *prima facie* the best judge of such an article that we could think of, and the latter a remarkably intelligent observer How far our expectations will be fulfilled will appear in the sequel

26. *A.S.*, II. 86-87.

We quote Tavernier's long account of the Peacock Throne in full:

'The principal throne', says Tavernier, who is talking of the Peacock Throne, 'resembles in form and size our camp beds; that is to say, it is about 6 feet long and 4 wide. Upon the four feet, which are very massive, and from 20 to 25 inches high, are fixed the four bars which support the base of the throne, and upon these bars are ranged twelve columns, which sustain the canopy on three sides, that which faces the court being open. Both the feet and the bars, which are more than 18 inches long, are covered with gold inlaid and enriched with numerous diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. In the middle of each bar there is a large balass[27] ruby, cut en cabuchon, with four emeralds round it, forming a square cross. Next in succession, from one side to the other along the length of the bars there are similar crosses, arranged so that in one the ruby is in the middle of four emeralds, and in another the emerald is in the middle and four balass rubies surround it. The emeralds are table-cut, and the intervals between the rubies and emeralds are covered with diamonds, the largest of which do not exceed 10 to 12 carats in weight, all showy stones, but very flat. There are also in some parts pearls set in gold, and upon one of the longer sides of the throne there are four steps to ascend it. Of the three cushions or pillows which are upon the throne, that which is placed behind the Emperor's back is large and round like one of our bolsters, and the two others placed at his sides are flat. Moreover, a sword, a mace, a round shield, a bow and quiver with arrows, are suspended from this throne, and all these weapons, as also the cushions and steps, both of this throne and of the other six, are covered over with stones which match those with which each of the thrones respectively is enriched.

I counted the large balass rubies on the great throne, and there are about 108, all cabuchons, the least of which weighs 100 carats, but there are some which weigh apparently 200 and more. As for the emeralds, there are plenty of good colour, but they have many flaws; the largest may weigh 60 carats, and the least 30 carats. I counted about 116; thus there are more emeralds than rubies.

The underside of the canopy is covered with diamonds and pearls, with a fringe of pearls all round, and above the canopy,

27. 'Balet in the original, for balass, &c.' (P. 303, *f.n.*).

which is a quadrangular-shaped dome, there is a peacock with elevated tail made of blue sapphires and other coloured stones, the body of gold inlaid with precious stones, having a large ruby in front of the breast, whence hangs a pear-shaped pearl of 50 carats or thereabouts, and of a somewhat yellow water. On both sides of the peacock there is a large bouquet of the same height as the bird, consisting of many kinds of flowers made of gold inlaid with precious stones On the side of the throne opposite the court there is a jewel consisting of a diamond of from 80 to 90 carats weight, with rubies and emeralds round it, and when the Emperor is seated he has this jewel in full view. But in my opinion the most costly point about this magnificent throne is that the twelve columns supporting the canopy are surrounded with beautiful rows of pearls, which are round and of fine water, and weigh from 6 to 10 carats each. At 4 feet distance from the throne two umbrellas are fixed, on either side, the sticks of which for 7 or 8 feet in height are covered with diamonds, rubies, and pearls These umbrellas are of red velvet, and embroidered and fringed all round with pearls

This is what I have been able to observe regarding this famous throne, commenced by Tamerlane and completed by Shah Jahan and those who keep the accounts of the King's jewels and of the cost of this great work, have assured me that it amounts to 1070 lakhs of rupees, which amount to 160,500,000 livres of our money (*Tavernier, I. 303-305*).

that the throne, to the best of my recollection, is valued at four *Kourours* of *Roupies*. I observed elsewhere that a *Lecque* is one hundred thousand *roupies*, and that a *Kourour* is a hundred *Lecques;* so that the throne is estimated at forty millions of *roupies*, worth sixty millions of pounds [livres] or thereabouts. It was constructed by *Chah-Jehan*, the father of *Aureng-Zebe*, for the purpose of displaying the immense quantity of precious stones accumulated successively in the treasury from the spoils of ancient Rajas and *Patans*, and the annual presents to the Monarch, which every *Omrah* is bound to make on certain festivals. The construction and workmanship of the throne are not worthy of the materials; but two peacocks, covered with jewels and pearls, are well conceived and executed. They were made by a workman of astonishing powers, a *Frenchman* by birth, named............who, after defrauding several of the Princes of *Europe*, by means of false gems, which he fabricated with peculiar skill, sought refuge in the *Great Mogol's* court, where he made his fortune' (p. 268-69). In an other place, speaking of the wealth of the Great Mug͟hal, he says, 'I doubt whether any other Monarch possesses more of this species of wealth; a throne of the *Great Mogol*, covered with pearls and diamonds, being alone valued, if my memory be correct, at three *kourours* of *roupies*' (p. 223).

Even yet we are not qualified to appraise these descriptions. We cannot discuss their respective merits unless we have before us the picture of a copy of the Peacock Throne (to be noticed presently),[28] which was prepared in cheaper material to the order of Akbar II (or Bahādur S͟Hāh II). This picture is to be found in the Delhi Museum of Archæology, and probably gives a more adequate idea of the Peacock Throne than any other picture extant. We regret that nothing nearer the original is available.

We will now request the reader to observe this picture closely and in detail. The Throne, he will notice, is unoccupied and stands on a special carpet in the Hall of Private Audience. High above is stretched on slender poles a large canopy worked over with a beautiful pattern in gold thread, and trimmed with a fringe.

Now this important picture is to be studied in close connection with the authentic descriptions of the Throne, which have already been placed before the reader. We are now in a position to take up the criticism.

28. See p. 100 below.

The dimensions given by Tavernier make the Throne a rectangle, it is true, but they are widely divergent from those in the Persian histories On the other hand, we notice that the ratio of the length to the height of the Throne, as given in the official histories, tallies very closely with that obtained from the measurements of the picture The breadth unfortunately cannot be ascertained from the latter, though one can guess it nearly corresponds to the official measurements, since the central window in the front and back sides is larger than the central window in the other two sides

The 'twelve columns' in *B N* and Tavernier are borne out by both the pictures in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology,[29] and may be considered as established, notwithstanding Muhammad Salih's 'eight' In fact according to Tavernier the most costly item of the Throne was the twelve columns surrounded with beautiful rows of pearls, round and fine, weighing from 6 to 10 carats each. It is to be noted that *B.N* speaks only of emerald columns, and *A.S* makes them of enamelled gold All these descriptions may of-course be true, but none helps in corroborating another Tavernier's statement that twelve columns 'Sustain the canopy on three sides, that which faces the court being open' is, as the reader can easily see, quite wrong, and in fact his whole account of the four bars supporting the base of the throne, and the columns being ranged on these bars is unintelligible in view of the shape and proportions indicated in the Picture

Mr Brown's suggestion that the Throne had originally eight columns, which were subsequently replaced by twelve, is mentioned below

The *solid box-like base of the royal seat*, which we see in the Painting constitutes the bulk of the Throne But in Tavernier's account there is no room for this big base, since the bars were fixed on the feet, he says and the columns were ranged on the bars

It is true that this base is not specifically mentioned in the Persian histories, but we can understand that gold weighing 2500 lb could only have been used on such a solid and heavy member Besides the total dimensions given in the Persian authorities correspond beautifully to the measurements of the Throne in the

29 The painting already referred to and the picture from the Bankipur Library Bādshāhnāma MS., which claims to portray Shāh Jahān's first sitting on the Peacock Throne See p 93 below

D.M.A. Picture. It may be noted in passing that in the Picture, where the Throne is unoccupied, the rail in the front centre window, on which the Emperor leaned and rested his hand, is absent, and is replaced by a pillow.

Now about the feet: The four feet on which the Throne in the Picture stands are very small, and this is negatively corroborated by the official account, which ignores them as too insignificant. Tavernier speaks of four 'very massive' feet about 2 feet high; while Bernier outdoes him and has 'six massy feet, said to be of solid gold, sprinkled over with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds'. Such heavy paws are inconsistent with the skeleton and structure of the Throne as we visualize it. Tavernier is as hopeless as usual. But even Bernier is not living up to his reputation.

As for the steps which afforded ascent to the Throne, *B.N.* has three, while Tavernier has four. The Picture gives no guidance, since the stairway is on the back side.

The most serious blunder in Tavernier's account concerns the peacocks and the tree. Considering that the peacocks were not only a prominent feature but the distinguishing characteristic which gave the throne its name, one feels disposed to doubt if Tavernier ever really looked at the throne. Tavernier has the audacity to state that there was only one peacock and on either side of it a large bouquet, *i.e.*, 'tree.' There can be no excuse for such gross misobservation or such careless statement.

Even Bernier, who saw the throne only from a distance, saw that there were two peacocks.

And yet Tavernier claims that his description of the thrones, which he 'had sufficient time to contemplate thoroughly,' is 'very exact and faithful' (p. 319).

Further, Tavernier makes sapphires prominent on the peacocks' 'elevated tail,' while *A.S.*, as we have seen, mentions only emeralds. Again, Tavernier speaks of a large ruby in front of its breast, from which a pear-shaped pearl of 50 carats hung, while *A.S.* speaks only of a brilliant ruby in the beak of each peacock, and in the picture a string (? of pearls) hangs from each beak.

The jewel consisting of a large diamond set round with rubies and emeralds which hung before the Emperor's eye when he was seated, is not mentioned by any other author. Probably it is no

part of the Throne, any more than are the two umbrellas fixed on either side of the royal seat In all probablity it was a *Kaukaba*. The reader will recognize these features when he comes to the setting in which the Peacock and other thrones were sometimes placed,[30] and will see that they were only appurtenances and ornaments added as occasion arose

In Tavernier's detailed description we cannot recognize either the Throne described by 'Abdu'l Hamid and Muhammad Sālih, or the one so vividly portrayed in the Painting Taking all things into consideration we are inclined to believe, and the reader who has accompanied us so far will, it is hoped, agree, that either Tavernier never looked at the Peacock Throne, or else if he did he had forgotten nearly everything about it by the time he sat down to describe it.

Tavernier's yarn about the throne having been begun by Tamerland is outrageous He seems to have at the back of his mind the accumulation of the jewel treasury since Tīmur's times A poor justification at best!

Now we can turn to Bernier's account, which calls for a few remarks He saw the throne, as he admits, only from a distance Still his remarks, where they are corroborative, are welcome

Bernier's opinion about the construction and workmanship of the Throne stands alone, but his allegation that a Frenchman, whose name is omitted, made the throne deserved examination The Editor says in a footnote that Steuart, in his edition of a part of Bernier's *Travels*, Calcutta, 1826, gives the name of this Frenchman as La Grange

Austin of Bordeaux, in his Letter dated Chaul (near Bombay), 9 March, 1632, tells us that SHah Jahan wanted Austin to make for him certain 'Engines of war,' to be used against the Deccanis, who, he says, are neighbours friends and confederates of the Portuguese On this ground Austin refused the demand, and the Emperor threatened to confiscate his two years' pay which was in arrears 'I had employed these two years at Agra,' he says, 'in making plans for a new throne which the King had ordered before he left Agra for the Deccan. The King had required that two hundred times a hundred thousand livres should be spent on this

30 See p 103-110 below

throne in gold, diamonds, rubies, pearls, and emeralds.'[31] This sum comes to 1½ crores of rupees at a livre=1s. 6*d.*

Now, some writers surmise that the Peacock Throne is the throne mentioned here, and that Bernier, in the passage quoted above, meant Austin of Bordeaux. And on this corroboration is built up the theory that the Peacock Throne was made or designed by a Frenchman.

It is to be remarked in the first place that while Austin of Bordeaux was making plans for a new throne for two years, Barnier's Frenchman, whatever his name, made only the two peacocks for the Peacock Throne. We have enough confidence in Barnier's care and precision to declare that his statement lends no support to Austin's story.

That leaves Austin's statement, uncorroborated as it is, to be dealt with on its merits. It may be granted at once that the time of Austin's writing synchronises beautifully with the period when the great Throne was building, *viz.,* 1037-44 *A.H.* (=1628-35 *A.C.*). But we find no further evidence in support of Austin's claim. And in view of the official account of the designing and the building of the Throne (already placed before the reader), it seems extremely unlikely that Augustin de Bordeaux was placed in sole charge of the designing. It may indeed be that Austin, being a foreigner of repute, was consulted about a possible plan for the Throne, and, his plan being rejected, no mention of his name occurs anywhere. And his statement that he was engaged on the plans for two years would still be true. In fact one is tempted to venture the uncharitable suggestion that the payment of his salary was perhaps conditional on his doing satisfactory work, and that when his plans did not meet with the Emperor's approval, his pay was withheld. This would account for the arrears to which Austin refers.

Besides, Austin's strong point as a jeweller was making of synthetic stones; and although his skill as a jeweller-goldsmith drew encomiums from Jahāngīr, he must have appeared as a charlatan to S͟Hāh Jahān, who was the greatest connoisseur of precious stones in the country, and hated false gems. The setting of 4000 artificial stones on the canopy of the throne, of which Austin boasts,

31. "Four Letters by Austin of Bordeaux" *in Journal of the Punjab Historical Society,* IV, i, p. 17.

must have seemed no more than a fraud to him, who knew the real values of things In view of this, even if SHāh Jahān placed Austin on the committee of designers (if there was one), we shouldn't be surprised if he was soon dismissed as incompetent or useless

And even if Bernier does refer to Austin of Bordeaux in the passage already given (of which we have no proof), his opinion about the French workman, as the reader has noticed, does not differ materially from the estimate adumbrated above But then he only made the two peacocks, which is not corroborated by Austin himself

Besides, when we read the account of the building of the Throne in the *Bādshāhnāma,* and notice the minute instructions issued by the Emperor, it does not seem at all necessary to look for a man who is to be credited with the designing and the planning of the Peacock Throne And from what we know of SHāh Jahān both as a jeweller and as a designing architect, we consider it highly probable that the Emperor drew up the plans himself, which were skilfully executed by his officers and workmen in the Goldsmiths' Department, or else criticised or modified so thoroughly the plans submitted to him that the selected model was more an expression of his own genius and tastes than of any one of his officers

Now we can consider the total cost of the throne The Persian authorities are clear on the point The price of the gold and the jewels came just to one crore according to *B.N*, and 1,01,00 000 according to *A S* (the difference is immaterial) But we must remember that this is the value only of the raw material, and the wages of the highly skilled workmen of the Goldsmiths' Department who drew regular salaries, and who worked at it for [illegible] years are taken no account of in this estimate [illegible] to a good sum Is the odd one lakh in Muhammad [illegible] just the workmen's salary bill? Aurangzeb's [illegible] below,[22] belong we must remember, to a later [illegible] position of *A.S*

Again, is it possible that when the [illegible] quotes Rs 1,11 00 000 as the total [illegible] (f 59 b), he has just counted in the [illegible] of the additional ornamentation [illegible] gives no details

22. pp 104-105 below

Next we can take up the European quotations. Tavernier has 107,000 lakhs, which, he says, amounts to 160,500,000 livres (=£12,037,500)! Even correcting this to 1070 lakhs (as the Editor suggests, to make the sum equivalent to the amount in French money) we have still ten times the true figure. And yet Tavernier claims that he got the estimate from the keepers of the royal records. It requires a great deal of charity to assume that Tavernier's informant gave him 107 lakhs, and Tavernier played at adding ciphers (to please himself). In that case 7 lakhs would be the cost of making.

Bernier's estimate is extravagant. But then, in fairness to him, we must concede that he quotes no credentials for his statements, like Tavernier. In fact he admits that he is talking from hearsay, and is himself not positive as regards the accuracy. Only we did not expect him to contradict himself, as he does. It can just be mentioned that when he is quoting 4 crores as cost, he may be confusing Indian rupees with *KHānīs* of Transoxiana; for we are told in *B.N.* and *A.S.* (in the account already quoted from) that one crore of Indian rupees equals 4 crores of *KHānīs* of Transoxiana or Tūrān.

The reputed value of the Peacock Throne grew into fabulous sums as time went on. Jean Law de Lauriston, who wrote in the fifties of the eighteenth century, values the Throne approximately at 280 million livres, which comes to some 21 crores of rupees! (*Mémoire sur quelques affaires de l'Empire Mogol 1756-1761.* Paris, 1913, p. 581).

We can wind up the descriptive accounts of the Peacock Throne with some queer remarks about it in *Storia.*

' Aurangzeb, ' says Manucci in one place, 'was seated on a throne in shape like a peacock—a marvellous piece of work made by King SHāh Jahān—but he never had the good fortune to sit on it' (*Storia,* II, 49-50). So the throne was shaped like a peacock, and SHāh Jahān never sat on it! That this is not a slip either of memory or of pen is proved by the following passage:

'Their year commences on the 22nd March, at which time a great festival is held, as I have said (III. 10). The palaces are decked inside and out with high and costly hangings, made by order of SHāh Jahān along with the throne, like a peacock, of which I have spoken (II. 34). This is of very great value, and the maker

never had the felicity of seating himself upon it. Aurangzeb was the first, who, upon the day of his coronation, had the benefit of ascending this superb seat. It was placed under lofty tents, and he continues to use it on the festival day of which I speak. It is at that time the usage to place on each side of the throne, but a little lower, all the thrones used by the kings of Hindūstān who preceded the present monarch (Storia, II, 348).

These cock-and-bull stories might be told to the horse-marines. We are quoting them only to illustrate how far a European 'eye-witness' account can sometimes succeed in making itself really ridiculous. We are convinced that Dr. Manucci never had a look at the Peacock Throne. Indeed even if he had heard of it from eye-witnesses he could not have thought that the Throne was shaped like a peacock!

Considering the fame and position of the great Throne it seems at first sight odd that no contemporary painting of it is extant, though there are several false claimants in the field. This is possibly due to the fact that no artist felt he could do anything like justice to his subject if he ventured on it.

Yet we often find 'SHāh Jahān on the Peacock Throne' on frontispieces and dust-covers of books on Mughal History. We can only assume that they are meant to be ornamental, rather than historical, and in some cases perhaps only an advertising device.

Even Mr. Percy Brown describes one of his pictures as "The Emperor SHāh Jahān on the Peacock Throne" (*Indian Painting under the Mughals A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1750, Pl. XXIV*). Apart from the fact that the throne here does not correspond to the Peacock Throne in any important particular, Mr. Brown [illegible] picture 'Painted c. A.D. 1630', ignoring the fact that the Peacock Throne was not ready until 1635 A.C.

Besides Mr. Brown makes several [illegible] I find myself unable to subscribe. [illegible] He is of opinion that the Peacock Throne [illegible] jharoka of the Hall of Public Audience [illegible] sidering the dimensions of the Throne and [illegible] me impossible, as I have said elsewhere [illegible] historians unmistakably locate the Throne [illegible]

21. See pp. 108-9, 110, 114, and 116 below.

He says further that 'accurate copies of it [the Peacock Throne] appear in several pictures of the period.' I have found none.

Again early in SHāh Jahān's reign, he continues, 'the throne was not such an elaborate piece of furniture as that so minutely recorded by Tavernier, who made his inspection in 1655, for some time between these dates twelve golden pillars encrusted with precious stones were introduced to support the canopy, and several other expensive structural features added. But in many respects the picture here presented tallies with the French jeweller's account.' The year 1655 is probably a misprint for 1665, when Tavernier inspected the contents of Aurangzeb's treasury. But there is no necessity to assume that twelve pillars were at any time substituted for eight; for, as the reader has seen, *B.N. Qarniya* and *Burhānu'd-Dīn*, all give the Throne twelve columns at the outset, and so does Tavernier. So Tavernier need not be defended by any such hypothesis. But the most curious thing is that the throne in the picture which Mr. Brown is discussing has neither twelve pillars nor eight, but only four! And he still calls it the Peacock Throne.

In the Delhi Museum of Archaeology we have a picture (No. J, 106) of SHāh Jahān holding a durbar, which is supposed to be his first sitting on the Peacock Throne. This picture is stated to be a photograph of a page of *B.N.* MS. in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore. It is presumably illustration No. 8 of MS. No. 566 (*Pādishāh Nāma*) *ff*, 241 *b*-242 *a* (*Catalogue*, VII, 74). The MS. was probably copied in the eighteenth century.

The text of *B.N.* which accompanies the picture would seem to suggest that at least the writer or transcriber of this book believed the picture to portray SHāh Jahān's first sitting on the Peacock Throne.

The base of the throne is not visible. It has twelve columns and twelve window openings. But there are no peacocks to be seen; and in other particulars the throne does not correspond to the standard descriptions.

Nor is this the only picture of the kind. In fact we have several pictures more or less closely resembling it. We need only cite

(1) No. H, 63 of the same Museum "SHāh Jahān in Darbar," which is not a photograph, and where the Emperor

and the courtiers are named A faded or unfinished picture

(2) Exhibit No B-80 of the Central Museum, Lahore, in which there is a single bird at the top centre

(3) Illustr No 10 in one of the issues of the *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* (No of issue not available), where the picture is wrongly described as the durbar of Jahañgir It resembles more closely the Lahore Museum picture mentioned above

But we can explore another avenue

It stands to the credit of the designers of the great Throne that several duplicates of SHah Jahān's masterpiece were made in cheaper material It is said that Akbar II (or Bahādur SHah II ?) had a replica made A picture in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology (no number allotted to it) claims to portray this copy We have no means of finding out whether this throne was made from some existing plans or drawings of the Peacock Throne, or only from memory nor have we any information about the date of this painting Another copy exists in the Indian Museum Calcutta (No 14524)

This picture corresponds so closely to the description of the original throne in *B.N* and *A.S* that we consider it as close an approach to the appearance of the great Throne as is available to-day

But things have so conspired against all chances of clear evidence on the subject that there is yet another throne given on Pl LXVIII (b) of *Lord Exhibition of Antiquities Coronation Durbar* 1911 which also claims to be the Peacock Throne of Akbar II (or Bahadur SHah II ?) and this is the throne it is added which was taken to the [illegible] when Akbar II paid his return visit to the Governor-General [illegible] (P 152) It is a [illegible] on a rather high base like the base of a [illegible] and a domed roof It stands on [illegible] feet and has [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] are fixed with [illegible] be [illegible] open for entry The centre one of these [illegible] panels [illegible] more elaborate than the rest and a [illegible] umbrella is fixed [illegible] The [illegible] and the [illegible]
[illegible]

The contention that this throne was a copy of the Peacock Throne cannot be entertained for a moment, as is clear from this description. It can only represent just one of the thrones in the Delhi treasury in late Mug͟hal times.

Our final opinion is that the picture in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology comes, as we have already said, as close to the original as we can get.

Another exhibit (D, 26) in the same Museum claims to be the peacock (of copper, originally gilt) which belonged to the Peacock Throne of Akbar II. The head is missing (*Catalogue*, p. 13).

The second duplicate is said to have been made by Nādir S͟Hāh. About this we know nothing more. It is clear from Lord Curzon's account[34] and the picture given there (*Persia and the Persian Question*, I, 318) that the *Tak͟ht-i-Ṭā'ūs* which he saw at Teheran could not by any possibility be Nādir S͟Hāh's copy of SHāh Jahān's original.

We have the testimony of Bernier for the statement that Aurangzeb, after his accession, wished to make some additions to the Peacock Throne. Aurangzeb, he says, was 'unsuccessful in his demand on *Chah-Jehan* for certain jewels, with which he was desirous of completing a piece of workmanship that he was adding to the celebrated throne, so universally the object of admiration. The captive Monarch indignantly answered that *Aurengzebe* should be careful only to govern the kingdom with more wisdom and equity: he commanded him not to meddle with the throne; and declared that he would be no more plagued about these jewels, for that hammers were provided to beat them into powder the next time he should be importuned upon the subject' (Bernier, 127).

The following remarks by De Thevenot are so ill-informed in other particulars that we can hardly cite them in corroboration of Bernier's statement. Still we append them for all they are worth: 'And the King his Father [S͟Hāh Jahān] dying in Prison about the end of the year One thousand six hundred sixty-six, he enjoyed at ease the Empire, and that so famous Throne of the *Moguls*, which he had left in the Prisoners appartment to divert him with. He added to the precious Stones that were set about it, those of the Princes his Brothers, and particularly the Jewels of *Begum-Saheb*

34. For fuller reference and discussion see below under Later History of the Peacock Throne.

his Sister, who died after her Father' (De Thevenot, 35) We know that the Throne remained at Delhi throughout S͟Hāh Jahān's captivity in Agra fort

But a better corroboration is available From a passage in *Ma'āsiru'l-umarā*, I, 408, it appears that under Aurangzeb's orders a man called Amīnā carried out some additional ornamentation of the Peacock Throne Thus the value of the material is said to have exceeded one crore

Even these descriptions and pictures fail to convey an adequate idea of the effect actually produced by the Peacock Throne on the spectators To have that idea the reader should visualize the setting in which the Throne was usually placed at the time of a durbar We give below *word-pictures of two or three court-scenes* which we would give anything for an opportunity of having been beside to witness

The first durbar at which the Peacock Throne was used was held on Friday, *3 S͟Hawwāl, 1044* (*=3 Farwardin*, VIII R Y) to inaugurate the New Year's Day celebrations, which culminated on the 19th *S͟Hawwāl* Over the courtyard of the *daulatk͟hāna-i-k͟hāṣ-o-'am* was spread a huge canopy (*aspak*) of brocaded velvet, which had been prepared in Gujarāt at a cost of one lakh of rupees,[34a] and under it were stretched smaller awnings (sā'ibān) of the same material on gold and silver poles The floor was spread with gold-worked stuffs and carpets. Here in the centre of the throne-place, round which stood a railing of gold, was placed the newly finished Peacock Throne In front of it was erected a canopy (*S͟Hāmiāna*) of gold-cloth with strings of pearls (prepared by "Yamīnu'd Daula" Āṣaf K͟Hān at a cost of one lakh) on four gold jewelled poles Round the Throne hung jewelled umbrellas, covered with pearls

34(a) This tent is presumably the one described by Tavernier in the following passage —

'The first thing done [by way of preparation for the festival] is to cover in two large courts of the palace from the middle of each up to the hall, which is open on three sides The awnings covering this great space are of red velvet embroidered with gold, and so heavy that the poles which are erected to support them are of the size of a ship's mast and some of them are 35 to 40 feet in height there are thirty-eight for the tent of the first court, and those near the hall are covered with plates of gold of the thickness of a ducat The others are covered with silver of the same thickness, and the cords which sustain these poles are of cotton of different colours some of them of the thickness of a good cable' (Tavernier I 302)

and edged with pearl strings; while other thrones and chairs, plain and gold-enamelled, and tents (*KHargāh*) of gold-cloth with silver poles stood close by (*B.N.*, I, ii, 77-78; *A.S.*, II, 85).

On a Lunar Weighments celebration (Thursday, 1 *Rabī'*II, 1064 *A.H.*) the Peacock Throne was placed in the centre of the *KHāṣ-o-'ām Hall.* In front of it was set up on four jewelled poles a *SHāmiāna* decorated with pearls and pearl-strings. On the other three sides of the Throne stood three other *SHāmiānas* of gold-worked cloth, each supported on the side of the Throne by poles of pure gold. On either side of the throne-place was set up a jewelled parasol embellished with pearls (*B.N.*, III, f. 86 *b*).

On the New Year's Day celebrations, a month later, the durbar was held in *SHāh Maḥal,* in the centre of which the Peacock Throne with a canopy frilled with pearls was deposited, two gold enamelled thrones being placed on each side of it, each one of these thrones fitted with a *chatr* (*B.N.*, III, f. 88*a*).

Two thrones placed on the flanks of the Throne occupied by the Emperor seems henceforward to become a favourite arrangement. So also the parasols.

And so on to Aurangzeb's time:—

In the following account of Aurangzeb's coronation the reader will find an arrangement with which he is already familiar.

From *'Ālamgīrnāma* (pp. 351-53) we learn that on the occasion of Aurangzeb's Second Coronation (Sunday, 24, *Ramẓaān*, 1069 *A.H.*) a square spot was prepared in the centre of the *daulatkhāna-i-khāṣ-o-'ām,* and a gold railing was placed round it. Here was deposited the Peacock Throne. In front of it was erected on four jewelled poles a pearl-studded canopy (or awning) the skirt of which had a frill of valuable pearls. On either side of the square throne-place were set up two jewelled *chatrs* strung with pearls. On both sides of the great Throne were deposited two gold enamelled thrones. Behind the Throne were placed stools of gold, on which was set out the *Qūr-i-khāṣṣa,* which consisted of begemmed swords with jewelled *pardalas,* shields, and *barchas* (lances) set with valuable stones.

In the *daulatkhāna-i-khā'ṣ* or *ghusalkhāna* a small jewelled and enamelled throne which belonged to this place was deposited in front of the Hall, while a large octagonal gold throne, which was furnished with roof, was placed in the centre of the Hall. In the

rooms skirting the courtyard of this Hall were displayed on gold and silver stools vessels and utensils of gold and silver in the customary manner

There seems to be a conflict of opinion as to where the Peacock Throne was placed at the time of an audience Bernier,[35] Tavernier[36] and the author of *Mir'atu'l Iṣtilah*[37] place it in the Hall of Public Audience, while Von Orlich[38] assigns it to the Hall of Private Audience

Bernier and Tavernier may be noticed a little more fully On festive occasions Bernier saw Aurangzeb seated on the Peacock Throne 'at the end of the great hall [Hall of Public Audience]' (P 268) In another place he says that in the *jharoka* 'the Monarch every day, about noon, sits upon his throne, with some of his sons at his right and left' (P 261) This latter refers to the daily audiences, and the throne mentioned is not the Peacock Throne which could not be accommodated in the *jharoka*, and which, besides was used on grand occasions only Again, speaking of the Hall of Private *Audience*, Bernier *says 'It is in this place that the King* seated in a chair, his *Omrahs* standing around him, grants more private audiences to his officers, receives their reports and deliberates on important affairs of state' (P 265) This was another small throne, more like a chair, possibly the small jewelled and enamelled throne,' which according to *'Alamgirnama*, belonged to the *KHās* Hall[39]

Travernier says the Peacock Throne was 'placed in the hall of the first court [the *KHāṣ u-'am* hall]' (P 303)

But when we come to the Persian histories we have no difficulty at all in determining where the Peacock Throne was placed at durbar time

The Peacock Throne was manufactured at Agra On the first durbar in which it was used (on *'Idu'-l Fitr* and *Naurūz* celebrations which occurred on Friday 3rd *SHawwal*, 1044) it was deposited as we have seen, in a throne-place prepared in the *Khāṣ-o-'ām* quadrangle at Agra[40]

35 P 268
36 I 303
37 PULMS., f 60 a.
38 *Travels in India* (Tr Lloyd, London, 1845), II, 24
39 See p 110 above
40 BN., I, ii, 77-78

The next occasion appears to be Thursday, 24th *Zū'l-ḥijja*, 1056 (Solar Weighment), when the Throne was placed in *daulatkhāna-i-khāṣ at Agra.*[41]

Next after this the Emperor is said to have sat on a 'jewelled throne' in the centre of the *khāṣ-o-'ām* hall in the Delhi Fort-palace, on the occasion of the first durbar at Delhi held on Tuesday, 24 *Rabī'* I, 1058 *A.H.*[42] This, however, cannot be the Peacock Throne since we learn later[43] that the Peacock Throne did not come to Delhi until 1 *Rabī'* I, 1060 *A.H.*

On the occasion of New Year's Day which fell on Monday, 18 *Rabī'* I, 1060, the Emperor, who was at Delhi, ordered Siyādat KHān that he, with the sons of Islām KHān and a few others should go to Agra and fetch the Peacock Throne. On the 1st of *Rabī'* I, these gentlemen arrived at Delhi with the Throne. On the 18th the Emperor sat on it, which was placed *daulatkhāna-i-khāṣ-o-'ām* (*B.N.*, III, 41 *b*).

On two following occasions (both Lunar Weighments), *viz.*, 9 *Rabī'* II, 1063 [44] and 1 *Rabī'* II, 1064,[45] the Peacock Throne was deposited in the centre of the *khāṣ-o-'ām* Hall.

After this there appears to have been a uniform practice of sitting on the Peacock Throne in *SHāh Maḥal;* for we know that the Emperor did so on Friday, 3 *Jumāda* I, 1064 (N.Y.D.),[46] Tuesday, 10 *Rabī'* I, 1065 (Solar Weighment),[47] Monday, 20 *Rabī'* II, 1065 (Lunar Weighment),[48] Sunday, 12 *Jumāda* I, 1065 (*Naurūz*),[49] Monday, 24 *Rabī'* I, 1066 (Solar Weighment),[50] Saturday, 1 *Rabī'* II, 1066 (Lunar Weighment),[51] Monday, 23 *Jumāda* I, 1066 (N.Y.D.),[52] 4 *Rabī'* II, 1067 (Solar Weighment),[53] and Saturday, 19 *Rabī'* II, 1067 (Lunar Weighment).[54]

The above information, the reader is warned, is based on the assumption that wherever 'jewelled throne' is mentioned in the

41. *B.N.*, II, 626.
42. *B.N.*, III, f. 18 *a-b*.
43. See below.
44. *B.N.*, III, f. 74 *b*.
45. *B.N.*, III, f. 86 *b*. (already given in detail).
46. *B.N.*, III, 88 *a* (already dealt with in full).
47. *B.N.*, III, 96 *a-b*.
48. *B.N.*, III, 97 *a*.
49. *B.N.*, III, 98 *b* top.
50. *B.N.*, III, 104 *a*.
51. *B.N.*, III, 105 *b*-106 *a*
52. *B.N.*, III, 108 *a*.
53. *B.N.*, III, 120 *b*.
54. *B.N.*, III, 121 *b*.

histories we have supposed it to mean the Peacock Throne This assumption is supported by a statement on p 235 of *B N*, I, ii, from which it appears that a certain great throne was commonly known as 'the jewelled throne' (*ta<u>kh</u>t-i-muraṣṣa'*) So there is a strong presumption in favour of Peacock Throne being meant It should be stated, however, that on one occasion already referred to 'jewelled throne' cannot mean the Peacock Throne Such verification has not been possible in the other cases

Aurangzeb's histories do not offer much material of interest What little there is, is found only in *'Ālamgirnāma*, the narrative of the *Ma'āṣir* being too hurried and crowded to notice such leisurely details An account of Aurangzeb's coronation durbar has already been placed before the reader The practice on the biannual weighments during the first ten years of this reign seems to be that the actual weighment took place in the *<u>gh</u>usal-<u>kh</u>āna* or *daulat-<u>kh</u>ana i-<u>kh</u>āṣ*, and this was followed by a durbar in the same place Then a little later a bigger court was held in the *<u>kh</u>āṣ-o-'ām* hall, where the Emperor sat on the 'jewelled throne' (presumably the Peacock Throne) The reader is referred to *'Ālamgīrnāma*, pp 591, 613, 633, 738, 916, etc

Later History—The Peacock Throne remained in India until 1739, when Nadir <u>SH</u>āh's hordes overran northern India and sacked the capital He took it away with him with other spoil to Persia Later history of the Throne is unimportant Still, for the sake of completeness, we may follow it a little further It had long been thought that the famous Throne still existed in Persia and was to be seen at Teheran After Lord Curzon's inquiries and research, however, it is considered established that the Peacock Throne, which he saw at Teheran, is not the Peacock Throne which Nādir <u>SH</u>ah carried of from Delhi, and that the latter was broken up long ago In the following passage he sums up the results of his inquiry 'In this dilemma, but with the growing conviction that the modern Takht-i-Taous had a very shadowy connection, if any at all, with the plundered treasures of Delhi, I turned to contemporaneous records I found in Malcolm [*History of Persia*, II, 37] that Nādir <u>SH</u>āh was so fond of the real Peacock Throne of the Great Mogul that he had an exact duplicate of it made in other jewels. This left two Peacock Thrones to be demolished between his death and the end of the last century, a catastrophe which in the anarchy and violence of those times would have been in itself no unlikely occurrence, but it left the Takht-i-Taous un-explained, as under no circumstances could the latter

be described as a duplicate of Tavernier's original. Now, however, I came across a passage in Fraser's "Khorasan" in which he mentions that an old Kurd told him in 1822, that "when Nādir SHāh was murdered and his camp plundered, the Peacock Throne and the Tent of Pearls fell into our hands, and were torn in pieces and divided on the spot". Any Kurd might certainly have been trusted to handle such an object as the Peacock Throne in the unceremonious manner here described, and, assuming the veracity of this particular Kurd, I witnessed with some delight the disappearance of the real Peacock Throne, or one of the two, from the scene.

A phrase in Morier's account had now set me thinking that the Takht-i-Taous at Teheran must be a modern structure after all. In the same passage which I have quoted in a footnote, he adds: "It (i.e. the throne) is said to have cost 100,000 *tomans*" (equivalent at the beginning of the century to about 100,000*l.*) [now valued at nearly 200,000*l.*]: herein clearly implying that an account or a tradition of its cost prevailed at Teheran, which was far more likely to be the case with a new than with an old fabric, and which was extremely unlikely to have been the case with an object carried off in plunder from a remote country seventy years before. At this stage, accordingly, I referred my doubts for solution to Teheran itself, and after an interval of some weeks was interested and (I may confess) rejoiced to hear, on the authority of the Grand Vizier and the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, that, as I suspected, the Takht-i-Taous is not an Indian throne at all. It was constructed by Mohammed Husein Khan, Sadr (or High Priest) of Isfahan, for Fath Ali Shah when the latter married an Isfahani young lady, whose popular sobriquet, for some unexplained reason, was Taous Khanum or the Peacock Lady. The King is further said to have been so much delighted with the throne, that it was made a remarkably prominent feature in the ceremonies that commonly ensue upon marriage. Here, therefore, at one fell swoop, toppled down the whole of the brilliant hypothesis, which has sustained scores of writers, and provided material for pages of growing rhetoric. From the same authorities I learned that the original Peacock Throne of Nādir SHāh (i.e., the survivor of the two facsimiles) was discovered in a broken-down and piece-meal condition by Agha Mohammed Shah, who extracted it along with many other of the conqueror's jewels by brutal torture from his blind grandson Shah Rukh at Meshed, and then had the recovered portions of it made up into the throne of modern shape and style, which now stands at the end of the new Museum

in the palace at Teheran, and to which I have alluded in my description of that apartment In this chair, therefore, are to be found the sole surviving remnants of the Great Mogul's Peacock Throne, and the wedding present of Fath Ali Shah must descend from the position which it has usurped in the narrative of every writer in this century, without exception, who has alluded to it.' (Lord Curzon *Persia and the Persian Question, I*, 320-22) [55]

And this fate befell not only the Peacock Throne but all the other thrones carried off from Delhi by Nādir SHah For we are told by Hanway that *Nādir SHah* carried off from India nine other thrones besides the Peacock Throne (*Travels II*, 383) Some of these we have no doubt reviewed in our survey

Aurangzeb

We have not much record of thrones or chairs designed or built to Aurangzeb's order Therefore, in the notices that follow, it will be difficult to say how many of the thrones mentioned here have already been reviewed under Jahāñgir and SHah Jahān, and which of them, if any, were prepared in this reign.

We can lead off with Tavernier's description of a throne which he saw in actual use at the time of one of Aurangzeb's durbars His description of its fittings and appurtenances and of the whole court, its etiquette and procedure will be found interesting

'In the middle of this hall [of Public Audience], and near the side over-looking the court, as in a theatre they place the throne when the Emperor comes to give audience and administer justice It is a small bed of the size of our camp beds, with its four columns the canopy, the back, a bolster, and counterpane, all of which are covered with diamonds

When the Emperor takes his seat, however, they spread on the bed a cover of gold brocade, or of some other rich quilted stuff and he ascends it by three small steps of two feet in length On one side of the bed there is a parasol elevated on a handle of the length of a short pike, and to each column of the bed one of the

55 Lord Curzon's conclusions are probably sound. We have no doubt that the Peacock Throne exists no longer But we must remark that throughout his inquiry the author adopts Tavernier's account of the Throne as the standard reference' he having no access to the official authorities like B.[illegible] We have already appraised Tavernier's description at its true worth. Yet Lord Curzon's findings are substantially accurate

Emperor's weapons is attached, to one his shield, to another his sword, next his bow, his quiver, and arrows, and other things of that kind.

In the court below the throne there is a space twenty feet square, surrounded by balustrades, which on some occasions are covered with plates of silver and at others with plates of gold. At the four corners of this space the four Secretaries of State are seated, who both in civil as well as criminal matters fulfil the rôles of advocates. Several nobles place themselves around the balustrade, and here also is placed the music which is heard while the Emperor is in the Divān. This music is sweet and pleasant, and makes so little sound that it does not disturb those present from the serious occupations in which they are engaged. When the Emperor is seated on his throne, some great noble stands by him, most frequently his own children. Between eleven o'clock and noon the Navāb, who is the first Minister of State, like the Grand Vizir in Turkey, comes to make a report on what has passed in the chamber where he presides, which is at the entry of the first court, and when he has finished speaking, the Emperor rises. But it must be remarked that from the time the Emperor seats himself on his throne till he rises, no one, whosoever he may be, is allowed to leave the palace' (I, 83-84).

On the occasion of the wedding of Prince Muhammad A'zam Aurangzeb visited the former's residence on 17 Sha'bān, [illegible] A.H. There he sat on a gold throne (Ma'āsir-i-'Ālamgīrī, 78, top). When the emperor visited any of his subjects apparently some of the minor thrones moved with him: and of course they were carried about in camp.

In Pl. L(b) of the *Loan Exhibition of Antiquities* the reader can see Aurangzeb sitting on a graceful little throne with a high back, the usual umbrella over his head, princes, ministers and attendants round him.

In No. E. 169 (Delhi Museum of Archaeology) we see Aurangzeb on a gold jewelled throne, square in shape, with four legs and a high back. But there is no umbrella over him. The decoration is in good taste, and is well represented in the picture.

Wooden Throne.

The present writer once saw in a German publication a picture of Aurangzeb sitting on a throne of ebony and reading the Qur'ān. The reference has been lost.

The Later Mughals

On Pl XIX of *Storia* (Vol II) we find Sultān Mu'izzu'd-Dīn, eldest son of SHāh 'Ālam, sitting on a square, four-legged, high-backed, jewelled throne The usual umbrella is held over him

Sultān 'Azimu'd-Dīn, second son of SHāh 'Ālam, is likewise seen sitting on a throne on Pl XX (*Storia*, II) The square throne stands on four legs and has a back The usual umbrella is held over the Prince's head

In H, 75 (Delhi Museum of Archaeology) we see Jahāndār SHāh (1712-13) sitting on a throne, with four legs and a back, to which an umbrella is fixed

In Pl LIX of *L E A* we see Nādir SHāh and Muhammad SHāh sitting on a single throne in a moonlight assembly in the Seraglio The throne, which is not the Peacock Throne, has four legs and a canopy standing on four columns Over it is stretched a tent on eight poles

In No H, 80 of Delhi Museum of Archaeology we see Ahmad SHāh (1748-54) sitting on a gold throne, hexagonal in shape with six rather heavy legs and a high back The courtiers are named and additional details given in the margin The picture is faded and worn

In Pl LVI (a) we see the Emperor 'Ālamgīr II (1754-59 *A C*) sitting on a jewelled throne under a canopy As Nādir SHāh had carried off all the valuable thrones in 1739, this throne and the last one were probably made after that date, presumably with cheap material The same applies to those that follow

In H, 83 of the Delhi Museum of Archaeology we see SHāh 'Alam II (1759-1806) sitting on a gold throne, plain and simple It is square in shape and fitted with four feet and a back

H, 86 is Akbar II (1806-37) sitting on a rather spacious throne—a square seat, with four thick legs, a footstool and a high back with an umbrella fixed to it Ornamentation is spare

CHAIRS

The Greater Mughals

Chairs—modern arm-chairs—seem to have been in use since Timūr's time

On Pl 44 (N C Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting*) we see Timūr sitting on a chair with an umbrella over him

In two pictures in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology we have Tīmūr sitting on the same chair as in the picture last mentioned. In one (bearing no number, being a recent acquisition) we see the *Amīr* sitting on the gold chair, lance in hand, *āftābgīr* overhead. It is a finely executed and brilliantly coloured piece of art. The other is No. H, 44, which is a defective, and quite inferior, piece of workmanship.

In H, 193 (same Museum) we have Tīmūr again sitting on a chair with a large canopy erected over him. The ruler of Bukhārā is brought before him as a prisoner. Here the chair is different from the one in the preceding pictures.

In Stchoukine (*La Peinture Indienne,* Pl. XXXIV) we see Jahāngir sitting on an elaborately jewelled chair.

On the Frontispiece of *Storia,* II, we have Aurangzeb sitting on a jewelled chair—one of the few pictures where one of the greater Mughals is seen occupying a chair. It is a light, tastefully constructed piece of furniture, for use on informal occasions.

Among pictures of nobles we have one of Sa'dulla-KHān, SHāh Jahān's Prime Minister, holding court. Sa'dulla-KHān is seated on an arm-chair, administering justice. The railing and the double *SHāmiāna* overhead are interesting details (I. Stchoukine, *La Peinture Indienne*, Pl. LV).

On Pl. XXXII (Binyon, *Court Painters*) we find Fākhir KHān, a noble of SHāhjahān's time, sitting on a chair.

The Later Mughals.

Chairs seem to have been in common use in later Mughal times. We see the Emperor SHāh 'Ālam sitting on a rather high arm-chair in Pl. XLIV (d) of *L.E.A.* Similarly the reader can see Mīrzā Salīm, s/o Akbar II, sitting on an arm-chair smoking a hookah in Pl. XXX (c). Another arm-chair, belonging to the Delhi Palace, which is carved and gilded, can be seen in Pl. XV (c).